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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [FR](#) [PREM](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE RESERVED ON MEK REPATRIATION REVIEW PANEL

REF: STATE 30120

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Paul Mailhot for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

1, (C) We made reftel demarche February 22 to MFA DAS-equivalent for the Middle East Antoine Sivan, urging that the GOF support the formation of a panel drawn from Baghdad-based diplomatic mission personnel to interview repatriating MEK members to Iran. We emphasized the need for this work to begin immediately, even though the ICRC had suspended operations in Iraq. Sivan undertook to make our demarche known to higher authorities at the Quai and to consult with the French Embassy in Baghdad. As an initial reaction to our proposal, however, Sivan said he had reservations on two counts. First, he said, we would be asking diplomatic mission personnel in Baghdad to perform work for which they had no training or expertise. Second, and more seriously, the panel would appear to supplant the ICRC. Interviewing repatriating MEK members is work that the ICRC should rightly be charged with, since it is the foremost independent, impartial body for cases of this nature. We seriously risked setting an unwanted precedent if we substituted a panel of diplomats to do its work, Sivan said.

[12.](#) (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

Leach